

CRISIS IN KOSOVO (ITEM NO. 9)
REMARKS BY RICK NEWMAN,
SENIOR EDITOR FOR U.S. NEWS
AND WORLD REPORT

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 15, 1999

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, on May 20, 1999, I joined with Rep. CYNTHIA A. MCKINNEY, Rep. BARBARA LEE, Rep. JOHN CONYERS and Rep. PETER DEFAZIO in hosting the fourth in a series of Congressional Teach-In sessions on the Crisis in Kosovo. If a lasting peace is to be achieved in the region, it is essential that we cultivate a consciousness of peace and actively search for creative solutions. We must construct a foundation for peace through negotiation, medication, and diplomacy.

Part of the dynamic of peace is a willingness to engage in meaningful dialogue, to listen to one another openly and to share our views in a constructive manner. I hope that these Teach-In sessions will contribute to this process by providing a forum for Members of Congress and the public to explore options for a peaceful resolution. We will hear from a variety of speakers on different sides of the Kosovo situation. I will be introducing into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD transcripts of their remarks and essays that shed light on the many dimensions of the crisis.

This presentation is by Rick Newman, Senior Editor covering defense for US News and World Report. He began covering military affairs in 1995, and to date has reported on a wide spectrum of defense issues from overseas operations to the future of military technology. He was awarded the Gerald R. Ford Prize for Distinguished Defense Reporting for his work in 1996. Mr. Newman graduated from Boston College in 1988 with B.A.s in English literature and economics.

Mr. Newman relates his first-hand experience with the treatment of journalists by the military during periods of wartime. He discusses the key lessons that he believes the military has learned over the years about how to advance their propaganda by manipulating public opinion through a willing press corps. Following these remarks is an article by Mr. Newman about how NATO bombings have pulverized Yugoslavian targets and caused widespread suffering in the civilian population.

PRESENTATION BY RICK NEWMAN OF U.S.
NEWS AND WORLD REPORT

One formula for starting a story is to begin with some anecdote that illustrates a larger point you want to get across. That's how I'm going to start today, with an anecdotal lead.

I'm the defense reporter for US News; my job is to cover the military, down to the soldiers who fight in the field, the airmen who fly the planes, and so on. About three or four months ago I had made arrangements with the army to "imbed," as they say, with any army troops who got involved in some kind of campaign in Kosovo, whether that be peacekeeping which it looked like at the time, or whatever. They said "Roger that," (that's what they say in the army) and everything looked like it was in order. I told them that I wanted to get a good

"imbedding" slot with the command part of this group. That means I would deploy with them, I would basically live with them. I would be one of them in a way, except I wouldn't carry a weapon, and I'd see what they do from their perspective.

So this was all going along fine, and Task Force Hawk, this group of helicopters, gets deployed to Albania. They call me up and say, "Are you ready to deploy? You're going to be in the hip pocket of the commander for this thing. You're going to be able to see how he runs this show." And I said, "That sounds great." I eventually got my way over to Europe, told them what day I was going to show up. I had to go down to Fifth Headquarters in Heidelberg, Germany, get outfitted with "mop gear," which is the chemical weapons protection stuff that goes from head to toe. They gave me a Kevlar helmet and a flack vest; I made a reservation to fly into Albania the next day and join up with them.

That night I got a call from the public affairs guy with Task Force Hawk in Albania. He said, "Just want to check in with you, Rick, and I just want to advise you of something. The commanders here, someone pointed out to them a story that you wrote about indicted war criminals in Bosnia last year and military efforts to track down some of those people. And this was a story that revealed some details about secret operations and so on, and the guy said, 'Having seen that story they just don't feel they can trust you anymore, and you're no longer welcome to embed with the command element of Task Force Hawk.'" So I said, "That's wonderful news. Thank you very much. I'll head back home."

That's about how the first 4 to 5 weeks of this war went, in terms of relations between the press and the military. The press was largely kept outside the gates, outside the fence, looking in, trying to figure out what was going on, not getting a lot of information on what was going on, very sparse statements coming out. In the last four weeks or so that has improved. NATO and the Pentagon have been releasing more information, and I've had some better opportunities personally to cover some of the people who are actually fighting this war, to find out how they do it, what they think about it, and so on. But this is a problematic war in terms of coverage by the press. There is tension in all wars between the military and the press that's trying to cover them. I think it's worse in this case.

The war is not going well. Clearly it's not going well. You don't have to be a genius to see that the stated aims of the people who launched this are not being achieved, and on the military side there are rules designed to limit access by the press even more than usual. For instance, General Clark, who's the four-star general in Europe running this thing, instituted essentially a gag rule on all of his subordinate commanders. They have been forbidden to talk to the press—absolutely forbidden, on the record or not—and you can imagine the sort of effect that has had down the chain for people who are not technically commanders or subordinate commanders. They technically could talk but they don't want to risk stepping outside that rule. So this has been a very difficult war to cover, in terms of just finding out what is going on. I think we are getting more information about what is going on because, ironically, official Serb TV is broadcasting it and that gives us some material to go back and pry information we otherwise wouldn't be getting out of these people.

For me this boils down to what I am going to call "three lessons learned." This is what

they do in the military after something is over or while it is going on: they figure out what the lessons learned are. So I am just going to go through three here.

First lesson learned for me is that no news is bad news. If the Pentagon is not telling you what's happening in an operation, it's probably because what's happening is not good or does not appear to be favorable to the Pentagon. I believe this was the case for the first four weeks, when they would not say anything about how many sorties they were flying, what kinds of weapons they were using, what they were doing, what they were accomplishing. The fact is that they were accomplishing almost nothing. It was one of the weakest starts to an actual war in recent times, and that was reflected in the fact that not much was happening. On the other side it was a demonstrable failure, because all these ethnic Albanians were being flushed out of Kosovo.

Second lesson learned is that the body count mentality is alive and well, only these days we're not counting bodies, we're counting targets. We get this rundown of targets at the Pentagon every day. They'll say, for example: "Last night we struck eighteen target sets, there were 96 dimples (a particular aim point on a target), today we've flown such and such sorties." This all seems to beg the question of how this is relevant to the objective of the war. We've heard more about these counts that supposedly demonstrate success than we have about how this war is actually doing in accomplishing the goals stated by President Clinton and others at the outset. That's something to watch out for. I think the press has been somewhat glib in this.

My third lesson learned is that the spokesmen for this war, the spinmeisters, are in many cases smarter than the press. I think the propaganda campaign has been very successful. I think the Pentagon and NATO have managed to find slow news days to get their message across. I think they have distracted attention on a regular basis from the observable fact that this war is not accomplishing what it is supposed to accomplish. I'll run down a list of a few things here. One of my pet peeves has been the headlines that say "NATO Intensifies Air War." We see this headline almost every week. Technically you could drop one additional bomb per day and you'd be intensifying the air war, which is nearly what has been happening. I think that this is less intense than any air war any member of the air force can recall. That's the nature of this graduated campaign.

I'll also mention briefly some of the claims from the podium at the Pentagon and the podium at NATO headquarters about atrocities. These are interesting standards for reporting this sort of thing. I'm thinking, for instance, of the rape camps. When Ken Bacon, the Pentagon spokesman, first mentioned the rape camps he was pressed about the source of the information, and it turned out the source was one person, probably an indirect source, and probably a member of the KLA. I don't think that that's the standard the Pentagon usually applies, and I know that if we apply that standard in journalism we get criticized for having low standards. That seems to be the standard these days. Another example is the Secretary of Defense saying, "We have reports that up to a hundred thousand ethnic Albanians may have been murdered." I seriously doubt they have evidence that a hundred thousand have been murdered. I think they have evidence that something less than ten thousand have been murdered.

We'll see how this gets sorted out when this war is over. The last thing that has kind of bothered me is everything that the press has been making out of various weapons systems. First it was the A-10, the low flying attack plane. We were just waiting for the A-10 to get into the action back around week two or week three. This is the thing that flies low under certain circumstances that don't exist in Yugoslavia yet. It flies low and can blow up dozens of tanks on a pass with its thirty-millimeter gun. The New York Times had a picture of the A-10s being deployed to Italy. The A-10 hasn't done anything of the sort, as anyone who has been associated with this campaign could have told you and did tell some of us from the very beginning. We're running these stories, we're sort of being urged, or certainly not discouraged, to run these stories, because it sounds like a wonder weapon is in the offing here, and Milosevic had better back down. The Apache helicopters are another example of this. There have been questions about how and when those are going to be used. From the day it was announced they were going, they have been held out as a big wonder weapon.

I'll just end with the thought that when this is over, we in the press are going to do a lot of post-mortem analysis of how this campaign went. I think there's also a case to be made that there should be a lot of post-mortem analysis of how the press handled this war.

MAKING WAR FROM 15,000 FT.—A WAR OF HALF MEASURES RUNS SHORT ON TARGETS AND POLITICAL SUPPORT

(By Richard J. Newman)

If a rising unemployment rate is any indication of how a war is going, then NATO ought to be pleased. According to Serbian government estimates, nearly half a million Yugoslavs, many employed in factories shattered by NATO bombs, have lost their jobs since the airstrikes began in March. Other privations are setting in. Serbia last week cut civilian gasoline rations in half, to about 2.5 gallons per car each month.

Yet as NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia enters its sixth week, it is in Washington that the will to fight seems wobbly. The House of Representatives last week voted exactly half for, and half against, a simple show of support for the air war. Another vote barred President Clinton from sending ground troops into Kosovo without congressional approval. Before Operation Desert Storm against Iraq in 1991, by contrast, Congress voted 302 to 230 to authorize all forms of military action.

The home front. Publicly, President Clinton shrugged off the no-confidence votes. But morale at the White House is in a "downward spiral," according to one official there. And the war is just starting to hit home in America. The roughly 2,000 reservists now packing their bags are just a fraction of the 33,000 that the Pentagon could call up—for an air campaign that President Clinton indicated could last into July.

A decisive turn in the war certainly would sway some doubters. Yet details emerging on the conduct of Operation Allied Force reveal a campaign that seems as halfhearted as the political support in Washington. The intensity of the effort—gauged by "sortie rates" and other measures—is lower than that of any other U.S. air operation in recent history. Severe restraints on what NATO can bomb continue to frustrate war planners; even Great Britain, America's staunchest

ally in the campaign, has vetoed targets sought by military commanders. And only in the last week has NATO started arranging basing rights and making other crucial preparations for 300 additional aircraft requested in early April. "The air war is going badly," says Michael O'Hanlon of the Brookings Institution in a study released last week. "The urgency of changing the war's strategy is . . . great."

NATO officials disagree, and point to strains within Yugoslavia as evidence that their deliberate approach is getting somewhere. Last week a flamboyant Yugoslav deputy prime minister, Vuk Draskovic, demanded on television that Slobodan Milosevic "stop lying" to the Serbian people. His candor promptly got him fired. Twenty-seven other prominent Belgrade intellectuals signed an open letter urging Milosevic (and NATO) to end hostilities. British officials reported that five retired Yugoslav generals were under house arrest—apparently for opposing Milosevic's tactics—and that hundreds of conscripts were deserting the Yugoslav Army each week.

A surge in travel to Moscow could be a further sign that Milosevic, and NATO, are looking to cut a deal. Both Strobe Talbott, the U.S. deputy secretary of state, and United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan conferred last week with Victor Chernomyrdin, Russia's former prime minister and now its mediator in the Balkans. Chernomyrdin then jetted off to Belgrade. The attention heartened Kremlin officials, who hope that Russia will have a role not just as a "postman" delivering messages but as a "middleman" trusted by the Serbs and heeded by NATO.

Langur. Yet Belgrade continues to defy NATO's air war, which has been portrayed as intense but by important measures is actually rather languorous. The sortie rate—the number of flights flown per plane, per day—is less than 0.5, according to NATO officials and an independent analysis by Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies. That means each NATO jet flies on average just once every two days. By comparison, the sortie rate was about 1.25 during the Persian Gulf war and about 2.0 during Operation Deliberate Force, the bombing of Bosnia that helped to bring Milosevic to the bargaining table in 1995. Both of these campaigns also opened with severe bombardments. Retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Charles Link says the Kosovo campaign should have started the same way: "In the first two nights we should have taken out the targets we took out over the next 21 days." He maintains that NATO jets based in Italy—closer to their targets than most aircraft were during the gulf war—ought to be good for at least two sorties per day.

That would let NATO bomb many more targets—except that approved targets appear to be in short supply. NATO officials say that Lt. Gen. Michael Short, commander of all the NATO air forces in the campaign, has argued that he does not need the 300 extra aircraft requested by Gen. Wesley Clark, the NATO commander. "The air view is, just open up the target list," says one NATO official.

Clark and others insist they have done that, by bombing one of Milosevic's mansions, an increasing number of government buildings in Belgrade, and TV towers used to broadcast Yugoslav propaganda. NATO aircraft recently have been flying a total of nearly 700 sorties per day, about 400 more than in the opening days of the war. Attacks against Serbian forces in Kosovo have more

than tripled. Concussions now shake Belgrade nightly. And 26 fuel-tanker planes are on their way, along with 10 additional B-52 bombers configured to drop conventional "dumb" bombs.

Yet this intensification of the bombing comes after most of Kosovo's ethnic Albanians have been driven from their homes, and there is skepticism even at the Pentagon that airstrikes alone will ever force Serbian troops out of Kosovo and let the Albanians return to their homes. NATO's strategy essentially has been to starve Serbian forces of fuel and supplies by attacking bridges, roads, and other supply lines, petroleum reserves, and storage sites. There is little doubt those attacks have hurt. All of the major roads from Serbia proper into Kosovo have been bombed, and at least 30 highway and railroad bridges throughout the country have been knocked down. NATO has destroyed all of Yugoslavia's oil-refining capability, and the alliance is preparing this week to begin enforcing a naval embargo against tankers bringing oil into ports in Montenegro, the smaller of Yugoslavia's two republics.

Gassed up. But without NATO ground troops to challenge them, it may be many months before Serbian forces in Kosovo actually cease to function. O'Hanlon argues that given months of warning that NATO air attacks could come, Serbian troops probably have hidden reserves of fuel inside Kosovo. And they are helping themselves to fuel stocks left behind by fleeing Albanians. NATO reports indicate that fuel shortages are causing mobility problems in some units—but that won't force those units out of Kosovo. And "long before any Serbian forces starve in Kosovo," says O'Hanlon, "huge numbers of ethnic Albanians will have starved first." Beyond that, Milosevic has been adding to his forces in Kosovo despite troubles with transportation. Clark himself acknowledged last week that Yugoslavia has been "bringing in reinforcements continually."

The ultimate battle, then, is not of guns but of wills. The natural advantage would seem to lie with NATO, which must only tolerate political discomfort, while Serbs have to watch their economy being pulverized one bomb at a time. Yet NATO's very caution, meant to keep the politicians on board, already bears the marks of a military failure. And as Congress showed last week, that's hard for any politician to support.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. VAN HILLEARY

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 15, 1999

Mr. HILLEARY. Mr. Speaker, due to my attendance at a military funeral, I was unable to record my vote for several measures considered in the U.S. House of Representatives on Thursday, June 10. Had I been present, I would have cast my votes as follows:

Rollcall No. 185: Aye.
Rollcall No. 186: Aye.
Rollcall No. 187: Aye.
Rollcall No. 188: Aye.
Rollcall No. 189: No.
Rollcall No. 190: Aye.
Rollcall No. 191: Aye.
Rollcall No. 192: No.
Rollcall No. 193: No.